



**VIRTUAL WORSHIP SERVICES ON
FACEBOOK/FPCOFVICTORIA:
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2020**

Our Scripture readings for next Sunday (the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost), October 18, 2020, are: Psalm 96:1-9; and Matthew 22:15-22. The sermon title is

“Dual Allegiances,” and the Bulletin is available here: <https://fpcovictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020-10-18-Bulletin-PDF.pdf>.



**SESSION DECIDES TO RESUME
IN-PERSON WORSHIP SERVICES
AND ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL
ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2020**

At its meeting on Tuesday evening, October 13, 2020, the Session carefully reviewed the public health data available to it for Victoria County, as well as the COVID-19 Pandemic Public Health and Safety Protocols (the “Safety Protocols”) that had been prepared by the Worship Committee at the Session’s request.

After prayerful deliberation, during which all voices were heard, the Session voted unanimously to resume in-person gatherings at the church, commencing with a Sunday School Class and a Worship Service at 9:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m., respectively, on Sunday, October 25, 2020.

During the Session’s discussions, several important points were made which bear emphasis:

- Barring unforeseen technical difficulties, Sunday morning worship services will now be “streamed” live on our Facebook page, beginning promptly at 10:30 a.m. each Sunday. Services will, as in the past, be available for subsequent viewing on both our Facebook page and our website.
- The Session continues to stress that individuals whose health may be compromised, and who are thus especially vulnerable to the coronavirus,

should continue to worship with us from their homes. If we were to adopt a slogan about this, it would be “When in doubt, don’t go out!” You will be remembered in our hearts and prayers as we return to the Sanctuary for worship.

- While inside the church, everyone will be asked to observe the Worship Committee’s Health Protocols. A complete list of those protocols appears at the end of this Newsletter, please read them carefully and plan to follow them to keep you and all church members and visitors safe. We will have greeters at the entrances to the church to help you remember all of the precautions we will have in place.
- Although it may detract from the beauty of our Sanctuary, the aisles and pews will be marked to assist you with social distancing. Alternating pews will be closed off, and each open pew will be marked to allow for six-foot separation between family groups.
- Finally, although the Session was tempted to return to in-person worship on All Saints Day (which this year falls on Sunday, November 1st), we believed that it would be useful to have a “trial run” on Sunday, October 25, 2020 to get used to our new Health Protocols and to see how the service would proceed with them in place. Similarly, we believed it was best *not* to celebrate communion on the first Sunday back in our Sanctuary. We will, however, most certainly have communion on the following Sunday (All Saints Day, November 1, 2020). Please be patient with us as we “learn” how best to worship faithfully *and safely* in the midst of this pandemic.

Please also continue to pray for the safety of our congregation, our community and, indeed, all of God’s children as the coronavirus continues to disrupt lives and threaten illness.

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION
CALLED FOR
OCTOBER 25, 2020**

The Session has called a Special Meeting of the Congregation to be held at the conclusion of the worship service on Sunday, October 25, 2020. During this brief meeting, the Congregation will elect an Elder Nominating Committee for the purposes of recommending individuals to serve on the Session as Ruling Elders in the Class of 2023.



October 21 - Libby Horine

If you or someone you know has a birthday this week,
please contact the church office:
361.575.2441 or info@fpcofvictoria.org



**GRATITUDE FOR FPC'S
GENEROUS SUPPORT OF
CHRIST'S KITCHEN**

Yesterday, I received a lovely email from Frances Miller which I shall share with you below. The email is gracious and self-explanatory. Frances writes:

Dear Pastor Jim,

Thanks so much for keeping the congregation informed about the needs at Christ's Kitchen.

*At this time, we do **no longer** need supplemental desserts. Local businesses have begun donating again, and I am pleased to report that our refrigerators and pantry are fully stocked with desserts. We do, however, continue to need volunteers on Tuesday morning, which is First Presbyterian's Church's designated day to assist with meal preparation and serving. Volunteers can assist with meal prep from 6:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. To-go boxes are prepared and distributed on a drive-through basis from 10:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. No one is served in the dining room. No one except volunteers are allowed in the building.*

Because of the large number of people who are served daily, we are no longer able to complete food preparation on Tuesday mornings. For Church members who are understandably anxious about exposure to the coronavirus, volunteers are needed Monday afternoons from 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. During this time desserts are cut and plated, and fruit salads are prepared for Tuesday. There are no clients on the premises, and only a few kitchen staff are present. Volunteers can easily practice social distancing in the large dining area. Everyone in the building must wear a mask and gloves at all times, wash hands frequently, and practice food-handling safety.

Masks and gloves are provided by Christ's Kitchen, or volunteers can bring their own. Volunteers must wear closed toe shoes, and a head covering (ball cap, hair net, or scrub cap).

Christ's Kitchen is providing more meals and food than ever before. Area homeless depend on Christ's Kitchen for a daily meal. However, the majority of the people needing assistance these days are people whose lives have been adversely affected by the pandemic through loss of jobs and income.

Christ's Kitchen is grateful for the continued support of First Presbyterian Church. Interested members who are not able to volunteer their time can assist by donating canned goods, bottled water, or ziplock bags. Please call the Church office if you have any questions, or contact Frances Miller or Billy Leske.

If you are able to volunteer during the times Frances has suggested, or if you could provide some of the other items Frances has suggested, please do so frequently and with joy. Meanwhile, let us give thanks to God for the time, energy, service, and sacrifice given by Frances, Billy, and so many other members of our church to serving those less fortunate than ourselves. This is truly Christ-honoring work that is being done.

TREASURER'S REPORT

For a while now we have been publicizing our upgraded website where it is now possible for visitors and for the members, family, and friends of FPC to make contributions to our church via the Internet (<https://fpcofvictoria.org/>).

During last's Sunday's virtual worship service, I had asked Jim Stokes, our Treasurer and a member of our Session, to give us a brief overview of FPC's financial circumstances through the first nine months of the calendar year and the initial six months of the coronavirus pandemic. Jim has an honest way with words, and he sure knows how to keep it short and sweet!

In case you missed it, here is his report:

I missed seeing you in church last Sunday, and the one before that, and the one.... Fellowship doesn't need lingering conversations, not even handshakes or hugs, but they are available if warranted ... usually. For the past six months, however, they have been sorely missed. 2020 has not been a usual year. If that is not sufficiently profound, think back to Hurricane Harvey. It has been a long time since we had a "usual" Sunday morning worship service, much less a series of them.

Actually, the finances of the church have been surprisingly resilient. Thank generous members, supportive Sessions (an organization that changes a little each year) and above all, thank God. The core of the First Presbyterian Church's financial resources is the group of members who faithfully pledge almost every year. Those folks, this year, are donating at a pace that exceeds what they intended. That's great!

What we missed for the past six months, besides fellowship, is the almost routine passing of the offering plate. Hard to do that "virtually"! Those weekly offerings were from faithful followers who may not have pledged and from visitors. Gradually, over the course of Harvey and, even more so, the pandemic, our financial reserves have diminished. Nevertheless, we look forward to an exciting year in 2021 at First Presbyterian Church when we can begin to expand again and, financially, begin to rebuild our reserves. In recent years, those reserves (accumulated in past years by wise stewards of our church) were the cushion we needed for survival.

We expect to worship together in our sanctuary soon. The organ is better than ever. The sermons are better in person. The Session will do all it can do to restore our financial health. Your donations can help, either by mail, in the offering plate, through the internet via the green button on the home page of our website, or especially by generous pledges again next year. It will be a wonderful feeling to wave at each other soon and wave goodbye to Covid-19.

As Jim has explained so well, our income has suffered in 2020, principally due to the inability to gather in person in our Sanctuary. At the same time, we have monitored (and reduced expenses) to compensate for shortfalls in our budget. As we return to in-person worship, as we pray for a vaccine against this dreadful virus, let us remain generous and optimistic. The Holy Spirit is at work in our midst. Let us move forward confident in God's will for his people.

**CURRENT COPIES OF “THESE DAYS”
HAVE RECENTLY ARRIVED**

The church has recently received the October/November/December 2020 editions of “*These Days: Daily Devotions for Living by Faith*.” Upon request, we would be happy to mail a copy to any member desiring one. Especially in these extended times of isolation and separation, the devotionals in this cherished publication are a wonderful source of inspiration, hope, and comfort. Please contact us at the church office so that we may send you your personal copy.

Peace, grace, and mercy,
Pastor Jim

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